THE NEW MALAYSIA

Frank G. Carpenter Writes of the New Movements at the South End of Asia

How John Bull is Reclaiming the Jungle and Civilizing the Malays—The Great Ports of Singapore and Penang, the Warehouse of South Asia—Their Cosmopolitan Crowds—The Chinese Invasion—Tin Millionaires—The Great Ore Deposits and How They Are Mined.

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SINGAPORE, 1909.—I write today of the awakening of Malaysia. I have already described how this whole Asiatic continent is throbbing with the invasion of our new civilization. The movement extends from the snows of the north where over the Trans-Siberian railroad the Russians are pouring in immigrants at the rate of ten thousand per day, down to this very tip of the Malay peninsula within 80 miles of the equator, where new roads are making, railroads building and cities are rising into being. I have told you how the Chinese are preparing for a constitutional government and how the Japanese have overthrown the old courts and corruption of Korea and are there instituting schools and civilized ways. I hear that similar work has begun in the French Chinese possession; and also, in Siam, where Bangkok, the capital, is now a live, up-to-date city with electric lights, street railroads, telephones, newspapers and schools.

At the End of the Continent.

Away down here at the south end of Asia the western invasion has been going on for some years. It began in Singapore and Penang, the two chief cities of the Straits Settlements, belonging to England. Founded more than a generation before the birth of Chicago, they were for a long time trade outposts only. They are now going forward at telegraphic speed, and the Malay peninsula is moving with them. That country, which, beginning with Burma and Siam, extends southward to Singapore, was until lately, in a state of savage innocuous desuetude. Then the English took hold, consolidated the tribes, and took the Malay states under their protection. Since then roads have been cut through the jungles, and the peninsula has thousands of miles of highways better than those of the Philippines, and equal to the best roads of Java. You can ride for days in an automobile through these federated Malay states, and not have enough bumps to stir up your liver. Within the past year or so railroads have been projected, and the chief centers are now connected by rail with the ports. About 400 miles of track have already been laid, and there are 2,500 miles of telegraph in operation.

Instead of the barbarous rule of the Malay sultans, the people now have the British to administer their laws. Crime is decreasing; there are courts of all kinds, and a first-class police force. The government has established hospitals throughout the peninsula, and it is developing all sorts of industries.

In Perak irrigation works have been dug and rubber plantations are now growing in the several states. The trees are planted at 200 to the acre, and there are already about 10,000,000 in bearing. The tin and gold deposits are being exploited, and the tin output is now worth more than $50,000,000 per year. All this is the work of less than a generation, and the increase of today is more rapid than ever.

The Straits Settlements.

The advance made at the Straits Settlements themselves is surprising. These little British possessions, consisting of the two island of Singapore and Penang, and a small strip of the mainland, now rank among the richest parts of the world. Penang is not much bigger than the District of Columbia, and Singapore a little more than double as large. Nevertheless, the two have a revenue of more than six million gold dollars, and a foreign trade greater than that of many a nation of Europe. It was almost four hundred millions last year, and its imports now amount to two hundred million dollars per annum. The total tonnage of the colony, including the various ports, surpasses that of any one great port of the world, and Singapore itself, ranks fifth among the trade ports. Here in the east it is only surpassed by Hongkong, something like nine or ten thousand vessels coming in and going out of its harbor every year.

The Warehouses of South Asia.

I wish I could take you to the wharves of Singapore and show you this great warehouse of South Asia. The port is free, and it has become a distributing center for the countries about. It is 1,440 miles from Hongkong, 8,000 miles from London, and only two or three days from Java, Borneo and others of the Dutch Indies. Sumatra is in plain view from where I am writing, Bangkok, Siam, is only four days away, and Burma is just around the corner. This island lies midway in the Straits of Malacca. It is the chief stopping place between the Pacific and Indian oceans, and it is just half way between China and India. It is the gateway of the east, where the shaved heads of the celestials and the turbans of the Hindus bump against one another. To the north and east all is Mongolian, to the west and northwest everything Indian.

I came to Singapore from Hongkong. We skirted French China, went by the Gulf of Siam and then coasted the Malay Peninsula, whose palm trees could be seen quivering in the hot breeze. We passed wooded islands and entered a sapphire sea surrounded by a green archipelago, at the back of which Singapore lay like a picture before us. It was afternoon and heavy black clouds hung over the palms. The mighty steamers coming in and going out left trails of smoke behind them, and as we advanced the storm broke and a peal of thunder gave us a royal salute. Then the air cleared and we could see Singapore rising almost straight up from the water.

Singapore's Shipping.

Big business blocks extend along the shore for a mile or more. The city has about five miles of docks and the harbor is one of the busiest of the world. The wharves are so built that ships can steam right up to them, and scores were at anchor discharging or taking on cargo. My ship was one of the P. & O. line, and ship was one of the P. & O. line, and the city before we came to the pier. We passed vessels going out on their way to Australia, great liners coming in from Ceylon and a royal Dutch packet vessel bound for Borneo, the Celebes and New Guinea.

As we neared our anchorage we could see the Chinese coolies working on the new docks. Tens of millions of dollars have already been spent to improve the facilities for handling cargo, and the government is now laying out millions more. Within the past two years it has entered upon a scheme of expansion which comprises about forty million gold dollars, and the work of carrying this out is now under way. Included in it is a dock for repairing vessels which will take in ships almost nine hundred feet long and accommodate the largest steamer afloat.

Scenes at the Wharves.

But come with me for a walk along the wharves, and see how the freight is managed in one of the biggest ports of the orient. The laborers are of every shade of black, yellow and brown. There are hundreds of Chinese whose cream-colored skins have been turned to old gold by the tropical sun. They wear little more than breechcloths around their waists, and carry great loads upon their bare shoulders. They load and unload the coal and do the heaviest work of all kinds. Here is a ship taking on fuel. A platform has been built from its deck to the wharf. It is an inclined roadway, with an angle of forty-five degrees; but up and down it, as busy as ants, the yellow laborers trot. They work in twos, each couple carrying a great bag of coal, slung to a pole which rests on their shoulders. There are fifty thousand tons of coal in those warehouses at the back and a ship can be loaded in two hours. That coal comes from England, and it has traveled over 8,000 miles to the Strait of Malacca.

Among the other workmen are Klings, as black as coal and as straight as pine trees. It is they who drive the bullock carts from wharf to wharf, or back into the city. They are lean, wiry fellows, with long hair on their chests and limbs and straight black hair coiled around their heads. They have regular features, and their lips are as thin and their foreheads as high as our own. They dress in white cotton, a single sheet of which forms a whole suit. There are hundreds of their race in the city. They are noted for their thrift, and many of them are bankers, who have thousands to lend, although their daily dress costs less than one dollar, and they sit half naked on the boxes in which their money is kept.

The cart that man is driving is pulled by two humped cattle like the sacred bullocks of India. The animals are as white as snow, and as clean limbed as Jerseys. They walk like aristocrats, and were they in Holy Benares, on the banks of the Ganges, they would be fed daily upon rosebuds, and garlands of flowers. Down here the god Mammon

RUBBER PLANTATION IN THE FEDERATED MALAY STATES.

rules, and, yoked to great carts, they drag the bales of cotton, bricks of tin and bundles of rattan over the roads.

A Medley of Humanity.

Going on into the city, we see strange characters at every turn. Each street is a spectacular extravagance, composed of every tribe and strange costume. We pass Malays in velvet caps, short packets and gay-figured sarongs, the latter a strip of bright-colored cotton which falls from the waist to the feet, and is fastened at the top in a knot. The Malays walk with a swagger, and they invariably smoke cigarettes. They are too lazy to work, and the most of them live from hand to mouth.

We see Indian Mohammedans in turbans of white, red and yellow. They wear gowns which reach to their feet. There are tall Sikh policemen in uniforms with turbans of red, Persians in white caps and Indians, who have caps embroidered with gold. There are short-haired Siamese, as brown as tobacco; shaved headed Hindus, as black as your boots, and wily Cingalese peddlers, with their long black hair done up in a knot, just back of the crown, and a half-moon child's comb to keep it in order.

There are Brahmins in jinrikshas, hauled by yellow coolies clad in short tight trunks of blue paper muslin and little palm hats which end in a cone. Their backs are bent double as their yellow legs trot along inside the shafts. There are also Parsees with tall hats which look for all the world like inverted coal scuttles, and with long coats buttoned up tight to the throat, and there are Javanese with gay-colored handkerchiefs tied around their heads, who wear skirts of lightning-streaked cottons.

There are also whites from all parts of Europe. They wear great helmets, which extend far out behind and suites of white linen or cotton. They are English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, with now and then an American tourist or trader. Altogether the crowd is as cosmopolitan as any you will find in the world. Singapore has about 200,000 inhabitants, and of these only 6,000 are Europeans. The rest are Asiatics, and the bulk are Chinese, Malays and East Indians. There are hundreds of Japanese, a few Arabs and numerous Jews. The colony is governed by the English, with a small garrison and a police force of about 2,000 men. It is well governed, too, and life and property are quite as safe here as in New York or London.

The Chinese of Singapore.

The Chinese are monopolizing the Straits Settlements. As soon as the English established a stable government they began to come in, and they now move back and forth to and from the Straits at the rate of several hundred thousand a year. They are thrifty, and the best of everything is rapidly going into their hands. They own stock of every corporation, and the British tell me that they can beat a European in any business deal.

Since England has taken possession of the federated Malay states, the Chinese have been going there in great numbers. They are crowding out the Malays, and this is so with the natives of all the islands in this part of the east. On the Malay peninsula and in the Straits Settlements there are now more than 1,000,000 Chinese. There are 3,000,000 in Formosa and 4,000,000 in Siam. There are large numbers in Burmah, and something like 600,000 in the Dutch East Indies. They are rapidly going into Sumatra, and nearly every settlement in Borneo has its Chinese colony. Hongkong is practically a Chinese city, and the same will be the case with Manila if we allow them to come.

Chinese Who Wear Diamonds.

The Chinese of these far-away islands are different from our laundrymen of the United States. They have rich men among them, who spend money like water. Many have magnificent homes, and their wives are resplendant in diamonds and pearls and in bracelets and anklets of gold. I saw a party of Celestials at the steamer as I landed. It comprised four women whose ears sparkled with diamonds and whose long silk gowns were buttoned at the front with brooches of diamonds and pearls, while on their bare ankles, above their loose slippers, were great bands of pure gold.

I see Chinese riding in automobiles. Some have carriages with coachmen and footmen in livery. They wear silk gowns and felt hats, and lie back on their cushions smoking their cigars, as their brown Malay coachmen drive them about. I see them in the billiard rooms and on the cricket grounds, and now and then I pass one flying over the roads on an American bicycle, his silk gown floating in the breeze. The biggest stores of Singapore are owned by them, and they are the cashiers and accountants of the principal banks.

Our former Chinese minister, Wu Ting-fang, came from this part of the world. His father was a Cantonese merchant, and his mother a Hakka. Both were Christians, and they were living at Singapore when Wu Ting-fang began his career as interpreter in the Hongkong police courts, and later on went to England, where he studied law and was admitted to the bar. Upon his return he was taken up by Li Hung Chang, and since then he has been one of the leading men of the new China.

Millionaires in Tin.

The tail of the Asiatic continent is tinplated. It has the richest tin mines of the world, which belong to the Dutch, between here and Java. The product of the British settlements is now selling for thirty or forty million dollars per year, and the greater part of this is dug out by Chinese. Much of the output is controlled by the Straits Trading Company, which has immense smelters on an island close to Singapore, the tin bullion being shipped away to New York and Europe. We take about 30 per cent of this tin or something like thirty million dollars' worth every year. It is scattered all over the United States and it coats our dishpans, tin cups and wash basins. Some of the dear girls who read this letter will see their faces shining back at them when they next scour the pie pans, and I urge them to remember that the reflection is flashed away out here on the Strait of Malacca.

In the Tin Mines.

The tin is largely from alluvial deposits. The dirt is washed out by hydraulic pumps and the ore also won in ruder ways by the poorer Chinese. The Celestials hunt for mines with crooked sticks as we seek spots for well digging. The hunter holds the two ends of the stick firmly, and when he reaches a tin deposit the stick is supposed to turn in his hand and point downward. Tin is usually found about twenty-five feet below the surface, and the earth containing it may be from a few inches to many feet in thickness. The tin grains are mixed with all sorts of gravel, from pebbles to boulders, and ordinary sand. They lie on a bedrock of limestone, slate or clay and are taken out and washed.

The mining is done by Chinese on shares. When the mines are deep they use ladders to go up and down, carrying the ore out in baskets on their backs. They stack it up in heaps near the mines and then wash it out in coffin-shaped troughs through which water runs.

After it is cleaned it is smelted in charcoal furnaces, the best ore yielding about seventy per cent of pure tin. After smelting the tin is run off into bricks of about the size of a five-cent loaf of bread. It then looks like silver and is ready for shipment. A ton of these bricks is now worth $700 and it has been much higher.

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